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SUBJECT: MEDIA PLAY: (JUNE 10) Tokyo Conference: Colombo

1 Summary. Tamil newspapers reserved pride of place for optimistic headlines about an interim administration and the future of the peace talks. Donor money and international support of the peace process were also well-represented subjects. English and vernacular government-owned and independent media echoed these themes. Even the opposition newspapers were unusually sunny, Editorials were apprehensive about how donor money will be spent and cautioned, "...peace will be secured only in democracy." End summary.

2 LTTE statements and other Tamil reaction.

Tamil newspapers reserved pride of place for optimistic headlines about an interim administration and the future of the peace talks. All major dailies relayed Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's remarks in their lead stories. Independent daily VIRAKESARI quoted, "Development work in the north through provisional administrative structure - participation of the Tigers assured," while state-owned daily THINAKARAN added, "...will amend the constitution once [they] reach a solution." Independent daily THINAKKURAL enthused, "Next stage of peace efforts started."

As always, Tamil media was detail-oriented - in this case - about the money. Pro-LTTE SUDAR OLI wrote, "Expected USD 3 billion, received USD 4 billion at the Tokyo Conference - Period extended from three to four years." Independent daily VIRAKESARI sealed the deal, "Japanese Representatives will visit Kilinochchi next week and inform Tigers officially about the aid received."

Surprisingly, pro-LTTE SUDAR OLI quoted Minister of Muslim Religious Affairs Rauf Hakeem, "Tokyo Conference a victory to Muslims," state-owned THINAKARAN quoted him as well, "All communities benefit by development through peace."

International support of the peace process was well represented in the Tamil dailies. Independent daily VIRAKESARI quoted Deputy Secretary Armitage, "President should inform the international community about her support towards peace efforts. Independent daily THINAKKURAL did the same, "The US is ready to point out the duties of the Tigers to obtain official recognition - Break of talks, unimaginable," and quotes the conference host, "Japan requests LTTE to return to peace talks ASAP."

Under the headline, "Armitage addresses Sri Lanka donors' conference, pro-LTTE TamilNet ran a transcript of the Deputy Secretary's opening remarks in Tokyo. The introductory

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quote is below.

Block quote.

Noting that the momentum of the Sri Lanka peace process is slowing, US Deputy Secretary of State Armitage said the international community needs to provide an infusion of moral and material support to move the parties and the process forward when he addressed the Sri Lanka donors' conference in Japan, Monday. But, he said, "no matter how much we pledge at this conference, it is ultimately the prime minister, the president of Sri Lanka, members of the LTTE, and most importantly of all the people of Sri Lanka, who will have to deliver on the promise of peace."

End block quote.

Tamil editorialists did not address Tokyo directly. Marking World Environment Day, the pro-LTTE SUDAR OLI editorial page headlined, "With reconstruction, a better environment is also necessary," and commented, "The aid given by the international community is required only for the reconstruction and rehabilitation work. The protection of environment is in the hands of all people. If the environment is polluted there's no prosperity." Independent daily THINAKKURAL's editorial, "Japanese Prime Minister's concern," chronicled his comments, and summarized, "The international community is anxiously awaiting the dawn of peace, ending the conflict in Sri Lanka. The peace

negotiations, started by President Chandrika Kumaratunga, are being carried forward by the Prime Minister with the support of the people. The day peace will dawn, fulfilling the expectation of people and the international community, is not far away. The peace efforts in Sri Lanka should end up victorious and be model to the whole world."

13. GSL statements and pro-government reaction.

State-owned television and radio stations' English and vernacular coverage of the Tokyo Conference was heavy, and included stories about unexpectedly large donor pledges and the participation of more than 50 countries and 20 financial institutions. International requests for the LTTE to return to the negotiating table also figured prominently, particularly Deputy Secretary Armitage's remarks to the Conference.

State-owned newspapers focused on donor money and international exhortations for the LTTE to return to the peace talks. State-owned Sinhala daily DINAMINA "Assistance pledged for PM's programs on Reawakening Sri Lanka and peace; (Rs) Kouti 40000 [US \$4 billion] for Sri Lanka - Highest financial assistance so far." State-owned English DAILY NEWS reported, "Prove commitment to negotiated settlement, Armitage tells LTTE," and "LTTE should return to talks - Japanese PM."

Concern about the domestic front also surfaced in government-sympathetic headlines. State-owned English DAILY NEWS reassured, "Govt. will continue efforts to bring lasting peace - PM," while state-owned Sinhala daily DINAMINA observed, "People in the north blame the LTTE for not going to the Japan confab."

ED: Approaches to development dominated the editorial pages of the state-owned English daily. The state-owned Sinhala daily editorialized about the threat to peace killings in the north pose.

--- Under the headline, "The challenges ahead," state-owned English DAILY NEWS comments, that a "bottom-up" approach" to development, "would enable a fuller fleshing out of development plans and ensure a more sensitive response from the State to the people's needs."

Block quotes.

However, the process of economic rejuvenation is not going to prove easy, and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe was frank enough to recognize this reality.

It was also recognized that although development needed to be put on a fast track, our public service was too large, poorly paid and lacks the capacity to handle the increased rates of project design and implementation.

We believe we are blessed with sufficient local expertise for these major projects, although their capacity for handling these challenges may need to be upgraded and enhanced. This, the State may need to concern itself with rightaway. A skills and capacity upgrading program for these exercises we consider an essential requirement.

Besides, there needs to be closer interaction between the grass roots masses, their organisations and the State and its agencies for a comprehensive push towards development. It is widely felt that the approach which is dominating on the development front right now, is a "top-down" one which could lose sight of the real needs of the people.

On the other hand, a "bottom-up" approach would enable a fuller fleshing out of development plans and ensure a more sensitive response from the State to the people's needs. End block quotes.

--- In a rare business page editorial, "Using Tokyo funds prudently," state-owned DAILY NEWS commented, "The government's implementing agencies should work closely with business chambers and key players in the private sector in formulating development plans that use the Tokyo funds. Their input will be valuable in identifying and designing projects that could propel Sri Lanka ahead of its regional competitors."

---Under the headline, "Killings in the north- a threat to peace," state-owned Sinhala daily DINAMINA commented, "There have been so many violations of the MOU in the past period. America and other countries sternly advised the LTTE quite a few times to renounce terrorism. Whether in or outside Tokyo, the LTTE will have to face allegations on human rights violations. They have to accept the basic principles of democracy. We condemn these ruthless killings and wish to state that peace will be secured only in democracy."

14. Opposition statements and pro-opposition reaction.

Opposition newspapers offered many of the same stories as the Tamil and state-owned press. The independent, but nationalist-leaning, ISLAND and Sinhala sister paper DIVAINA were unusually conciliatory in their coverage of an interim administration. DIVAINA wrote, "LTTE and the GSL are not poles apart in their views on an interim administration, while the ISLAND quoted Prime Minister Wickremesinghe, "To facilitate normalcy in civil life north and east should be

given an interim administration."
Under the headline, "LTTE, JVP and democracy," independent, but nationalist-leaning, English daily ISLAND criticized the international community for legitimizing Prabhakaran's leadership of the LTTE, and "is acting in a manner which is suggestive that it has accepted the terror outfit as the sole representative of the Tamils."

Block quotes.

Today the JVP has, no doubt, realised that democracy is much more rewarding than terror: It has won 16 seats in Parliament and a large number seats in provincial councils and local government bodies. Lo and behold! It is campaigning against terrorism today.

Why the JVP was not amenable to a negotiated settlement during its heyday of terror was its intransigence, which stemmed from the obduracy of its leadership. Hadn't the JVP leadership come to perish, the situation would have been different today.

Likewise so long as Prabhakaran remains the 'supreme leader' the LTTE's intransigence which is blocking the path to negotiations let alone peace will be insurmountable.

It is strange that the international community, which is pontificating on the virtues of tolerance of dissent, internal democracy and a host of other democratic principles and has given full cry to regime change in 'rogue states' has taken for granted the LTTE leadership and its ruthless suppression of democracy and is acting in a manner which is suggestive that it has accepted the terror outfit as the sole representative of the Tamils.

Hypocrisy of the so-called international community notwithstanding, the irony is that when the 'doves' try to counter the JVP campaign against the peace process by asking them if they could enter democratic politics despite an ugly past why can't the LTTE do so, they unwittingly support the cry of the anti-terror activists for countering LTTE terrorism in the same manner as that of the JVP.

End block quotes.

15. Independent media reaction

Independent television and radio stories about Tokyo focused on donor money and international support of the peace process. Independent newspapers followed suit. Independent English DAILY MIRROR headlined, "'I will never give up on peace': PM - Expresses appreciation of significant role by President," and reported, "US strongly urges LTTE to return to talks." Independent Sinhala daily LANKADEEPA observed, "'Promised funds will come only according to the progress of peace talks'-says Japan PM and asks LTTE to come to negotiations." The DAILY MIRROR's business page headlined, "ADB points to effective, quick aid utilization - Flood of donor support for peace and growth at Tokyo boosts Sri Lanka's profile internationally."

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